

## SENTENCING



## FAX

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## Sentencing Demographics in Maryland, 1996 - 2001

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The tables presented in this report illustrate statistically the basic demographic characteristics of Maryland circuit court sentencing, 1996-2001. (Because of the complexity of identifying primary, "controlling" offenses in multiple count conviction cases, the data represent only single count conviction cases at this time. A future report will present and compare statistics on multiple count conviction cases.)

Table 1 reports the percentages of sentences by each general offense type—drug, property, and violent (person)—and then breaks those percentages down by demographic variables. From 1996 through 2001, 54.0% of Maryland circuit court sentences dealt with drug offenses, 18.4% with property, and 27.6% with violent. 98.9% of the drug sentences were given to adults (18 years of age and older), 98.2% of property sentences, and 93.3% of drug sentences. Males received 85.0% of circuit court drug sentences, 83.4% of property sentences, and 88.9% of violent sentences. Whites received 15.4% of drug sentences in circuit courts, 48.7% of property sentences, and 33.5% of violent sentences; blacks received 81.0%, 45.6%, and 62.2%, respectively. Sentences for Hispanic and "other" offenders combined represented 4.5% or less of the total sentences for all three offense types.

**Table 1 — DEMOGRAPHICS BY OFFENSE TYPE**

	DRUG	PROPERTY	VIOLENT
<b>AGE</b>			
Juvenile	1.1%	1.8%	6.7%
Adult	98.9%	98.2%	93.3%
<b>SEX</b>			
Male	85.0%	83.4%	88.9%
Female	15.0%	16.6%	11.1%
<b>RACE</b>			
Black	81.0%	45.6%	62.2%
Hispanic	1.3%	1.2%	2.5%
White	15.4%	48.7%	33.5%
Other	1.0%	2.1%	2.0%

\* Sentencing data from 1996 through 2001. Single count cases only. Juvenile is defined as 17 years and younger.

Table 2 reverses the variables and demonstrates the percentage of sentences by general offense type for each demographic category. For example, 22.0% of juveniles (offenders 17 years of age and younger) sentenced to felonies in circuit court were convicted of drug offenses, 12.0% of property offenses, and 66.0% of violent offenses; similarly, 54.9% of adults were convicted of drug offenses, 18.6% of property offenses, and 26.5% of violent offenses. By gender, 53.5% of convicted male offenders were

convicted of drug offenses, 17.9% of property offenses, and 28.7% of violent offenses; the corresponding percentages for females were 57.5%, 21.4%, and 21.0%. By race, 63.6% of convicted black offenders were convicted of drug offenses, 12.2% of property offenses, 24.2% of violent offenses. The percentages for whites were 31.3%, 33.8%, and 34.9%; for Hispanics, 43.7%, 14.1%, and 42.2%; and for "other" offenders, 36.1%, 25.7%, and 38.2%.

**Table 2 — OFFENSE TYPE BY DEMOGRAPHICS**

	DRUG	PROPERTY	VIOLENT
<b>TOTAL</b>	54.0%	18.4%	27.6%
<b>AGE</b>			
Juvenile	22.0%	12.0%	66.0%
Adult	54.9%	18.6%	26.5%
<b>SEX</b>			
Male	53.5%	17.9%	28.7%
Female	57.5%	21.4%	21.0%
<b>RACE</b>			
Black	63.6%	12.2%	24.2%
Hispanic	31.3%	33.8%	34.9%
White	43.7%	14.1%	42.2%
Other	36.1%	25.7%	38.2%

\* Sentencing data from 1996 through 2001. Single count cases only. Juvenile is defined as 17 years and younger.

Overall, drug sentences are nearly twice as common as violent sentences and nearly three times as likely as property crime sentences. While both males and females have higher percentages of drug sentences, males receive a higher percentage of violent sentences compared to females, who receive a higher percentage of property sentences. Juveniles received violent sentences three times more than drug sentences and over five times more than property sentences, an opposite pattern from adult offenders. White offenders received roughly the same percentage of sentences in each offense type, while black offenders received drug sentences over five times more than property sentences and over two times more than violent sentences.

The Maryland State Commission on Criminal Sentencing Policy (SCCSP) collects and reports data on sentencing practices in the State's circuit courts. "Sentencing Fax" periodically publishes information about Maryland sentencing for state courts and policy makers. Its full collection of research, data, and reports can be found on its website, [www.msccsp.org](http://www.msccsp.org).